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THESIS

THE EVOLUTION OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN
VIETNAM

by

Glenn Ronald Walker, Jr.

June 1994

Thesis Advisor:

Claude A. Buss

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The Evolution of Civil-Military Relations in Vietnam

by

Glenn Ronald Walker, Jr.
Captain, United States Army
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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

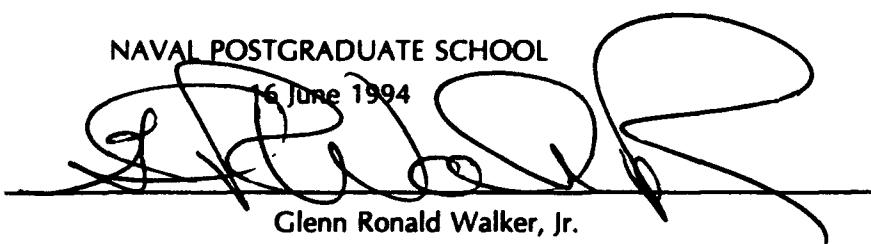
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ABSTRACT

The mere mention of the name "Vietnam" conjures up a multitude of conflicting images and emotions in the hearts and minds of individual Americans. The current move toward a normalization of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) demands a new perspective be taken on this traditional ambivalence. By exploring the geographical, cultural, and historical development of political and military organizations in Vietnam, this thesis goes beyond the focus of most sociological models that begin their examination of civil-military relations in Vietnam with the Communist lead revolution of 1945. One such model, that of the Revolutionary Professional Soldier, is used by this author to examine the evolutionary nature of civil-military relations in Vietnam, from their earliest manifestations during the colonial period to the present.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thesis is a study of a civil-military relationship vastly different from that of the one found in the United States (US). Specifically, the evolution of civil-military relations in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. One might ask why it is important to have an understanding of the specific type of civil-military relationship manifest in any given state? In the US, one may carry this line of thinking even further and ask why study Vietnam? After all, of all the wars and armed conflicts that the United States has been involved in throughout its history, only the Civil War may have tested the very soul of the nation more than the Vietnam War. Issues of US National Security provide a few of the motivating influences behind this thesis.

As reasonable as this proposition may sound, the body of literature available to conduct research on the nature of civil-military relations in Vietnam is remarkably austere. Why is this so? There is no lack of concern by the military and academic analysts. A vast body of data exists on Vietnam, but it is mainly oriented toward acquiring intelligence on the capabilities of specific weapons systems and command and control structures.

As a Civil Affairs specialist, I am required to be an expert on a specific state within its unique historical, cultural, and civil-military context. My duties require that I assess the impact of all US stated policies (overt and covert) on the state

under investigation, here it is Vietnam. Although this thesis is being researched in an academic environment, the basic intent of this project is to prepare me for my first real life encounter with my People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) counterpart in the near future.

I firmly believe that ignorance breeds misunderstandings which result in needless conflict. It is my contention that the national interests of the US and the SRV will be best served if each state works together in a cooperative and mutually beneficial manner. For this to happen, it is imperative that each side have a fundamental understanding of both the structure and nature of the civil-military relationships that shape the others' version of reality. This thesis is my contribution to the US half of the equation.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the evolutionary nature of civil-military relations in Vietnam. My research proceeds from three basic questions: 1) Does the theory of civil-military relations in communist political systems, as described by Perlmutter and LeoGrande maintains its validity when applied to Vietnam? 2) What does the comparison of the theory to the situation in Vietnam tell us about the nature of the current civil-military relationship in Vietnam? And Finally, 3) What predictions can be made about the continued evolution of civil-military relations in Vietnam?

By addressing these questions, this thesis will remain faithful to its intent and verify a string of hypotheses related to civil-military relations in the SRV. It is my hope that this research will be of value to decision makers and policy analysts

within the Departments of Defense and State, and to those employing US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) assets in Southeast Asia.

The research design for this thesis began with a canvassing of alternate disciplines such as - anthropology, psychology, and "Hanoiology" - to gain a theoretical insight into the historic and cultural forces that shape the development of human interaction. Too often, however, I found that these disciplines failed to consider the positive and negative functions of the military in the development process. To overcome this shortcoming, I turned to sociology because of its link to the study of civ.-military relations.

Within the field of sociology, I searched for a coherent framework from which to begin my work. There is a vast body of literature that attempts to explain how the party and the army function in communist countries such as Vietnam. The model I chose is one based on the work done by Amos Perlmutter and William M. LeoGrande of American University. It is my belief that they have outlined a theory of civil-military relations in communist countries, The Party in Uniform: The Professional Revolutionary Soldier, that when applied will best explain the situation in Vietnam.

In the most basic of terms, the Professional Revolutionary Soldier is foremost the creation of an armed revolution to change both the political and social structure of a state. His must be subordinate to a hegemonic Marxist-Leninist Party, see himself as a servant of the peasant class, and view military involvement in the political and economic process of the state as legitimate acts.

I have organized this thesis into seven chapters. Together, these chapters trace the evolution of civil-military relations in Vietnam from their earliest manifestations to the present day. In total, the chapters look at the notion of struggle and revolution. In this light, one may then ask the question: Are civil-military relations in Vietnam based on a revolutionary ethos? Of course they are. Vietnam has been in a state of revolution for over one hundred years. However, little attention is paid to this rich tradition of political and military struggle. Most of the research on communist civil-military relations, credits the Ho Chi Minh's Communist lead revolution of 1945 with creating the "revolutionary state mind set" present in modern Vietnam. To the extent that geographical, cultural, and historical factors influenced the development of the Revolutionary Professional Soldier ethos in Vietnam is at the heart of this thesis.

I. INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a study of a civil-military relationship vastly different from that of the one found in the United States (US). Specifically, the evolution of civil-military relations in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV). One might ask why it is important to have an understanding of the specific type of civil-military relationship manifest in any given state? In the US, one may carry this line of thinking even further and ask why study Vietnam? After all, of all the wars and armed conflicts that the US has been involved in throughout its history, only the Civil War may have tested the very soul of the nation more than the Vietnam War. Issues of US national security provide a few of the motivating influences behind this thesis.

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I firmly believe that ignorance breeds misunderstandings which result in needless conflict. It is my contention that the national interests of the US and the SRV will be best served if each state works together in a cooperative and mutually beneficial manner. For this to happen, it is imperative that each side have a fundamental understanding of both the structure and nature of the civil-military relationships that shape the others' vision of reality. This thesis is my contribution to the US half of the equation.

A. OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to investigate the evolutionary nature of civil-military relations in Vietnam.¹ My research proceeds from three basic questions: 1) Does the theory of civil-military relations in communist political systems, as described by Amos Perlmutter and William LeoGrande maintain its validity when applied to Vietnam? 2) What does the comparison of the theory to the situation in Vietnam tell us about the nature of current civil-military relations? And Finally, 3)

¹In order not to confuse the reader, throughout this thesis I use a single term to identify the geographic region of Southeast Asia that has at varies times been known as: Tonkin, Annam, Cochinchina, French IndoChina, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Republic of Vietnam, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The term I have chosen is simply "Vietnam".

What predictions can be made about the continued evolution of civil-military relations in Vietnam?

By addressing these questions, this thesis will remain faithful to its intent and verify a string of hypotheses related to civil-military relations in the SRV. It is my hope that this research will be of value to decision makers and policy analysts within the Departments of Defense and State, and to those employing US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) assets in Southeast Asia.

B. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design for this thesis began with a canvassing of alternate disciplines such as - anthropology, psychology, and "Hanoiology" - to gain a theoretical insight into the historic and cultural forces that shape the development of human interaction. Too often, however, I found that these disciplines failed to consider the positive and negative functions of the military in the development process. To overcome this shortcoming, I then turned to sociology because of its link to the study of civil-military relations.

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Uniform: Toward a Theory of Civil-Military Relations in Communist Political Systems,² that when applied will best explain the situation in Vietnam.

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C. ORGANIZATION

I have organized this thesis into seven chapters. Together these chapters trace the evolution of civil-military relations in Vietnam. Chapter II serves as the theoretical benchmark on which all proceeding chapters are built. It details the environmental, structural, and specific type of relationships that make up the model. In Chapter III, the specific geographical, historical, and cultural factors unique to Vietnam are discussed as they relate to the development of the Revolutionary Professional Soldier ethos in Vietnam. Chapter IV builds on the issues presented in chapter III by discussing the impact of early political and military forces on the Vietnamese case. Chapter IV concerns itself with the Period of Civil-Military Evolution. In it I look at formal and informal aspects of the Party-

²Amos Perlmutter and William M. LeoGrande, "The Party in Uniform: Toward a Theory of Civil-Military Relations in Communist Political Systems", American Political Science Review, 76:4, 1982, p. 778-789.

State and Party-Military interaction as they relate to the model. These relationships fall into three basic types - fused, symbiotic, and coalitional. Chapter VI serves as an overview of the nature of current civil-military conflicts in Vietnam. Finally, Chapter VII is a summary and concluding statement on the results of my research in to the three questions at the heart of this thesis.

D. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS ENCOUNTERED

The nature of the issue being studied, the contexts within which one must conduct research, and the questionable nature of available data are the primary factors that make scientific analyses of Vietnamese civil-military relations difficult, although possible. The closed, paranoid, and fearful nature of the Vietnamese government add to the difficulties of gathering primary source material. There is little official public documentation available and uncensored newspaper sources are nonexistent. These facts are compounded by a lack of qualified Vietnamese linguists in both the academic and military community. Finally, all of the factors listed above have been compounded by the constant state of war present in the region.

My research has therefore been limited to sources such as SRV Government documents available through Dr. Douglas Pike's IndoChina Archives, official radio broadcasts and newspapers stories translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), declassified US intelligence files, academic books and monographs,

and personal interviews with individuals that are operating in the region either on commercial, humanitarian, or official government business.

II. THE REVOLUTIONARY PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER DEFINED

This chapter forms the basic framework for the analysis of civil-military relations, as seen in the case of Vietnam that follows. It is in the application of the theoretical model described by Perlmutter and LeoGrande, paraphrased below, that this author will attempt to answer the three research question posed in Chapter I. Specifically: 1) Does the theory of civil-military relations in communist political systems, as described by Perlmutter and LeoGrande maintains its validity when applied to Vietnam? 2) What does the comparison of the theory to the situation in Vietnam tell us about the nature of the current civil-military relationship in Vietnam? And Finally, 3) What predictions can be made about the continued evolution of civil-military relations in Vietnam?

The underlining philosophy of the Revolutionary Professional Soldier is that of struggle. Unlike his western counterparts, the Revolutionary Professional Soldier must - 1) be born of a social as well as political struggle and 2) have the revolution remain a constant source of both legitimacy and motivation thorough out his existence. The orientation of the Revolutionary Professional Soldier is to maintain the revolution and to protect the independence of the revolutionary state. The archetypical political revolution of the post World War II time frame has to date been one conducted by socialist political parties. These revolutions are either against an imperial power or a traditional host regime. In either case,

the revolution has as its primary objectives the destruction of the old political institutions, social structures, and value orientations. Once these influences are eliminated, they are replaced with a new socialist structure.

In order to accumulate the required amount of political power needed by the socialist's to conduct a successful revolution, they must create their own military force. One closely tied to and highly controlled by a dominant Marxist-Leninist party. This melding of interests is accomplished by a vanguard party that supervises, coordinates, and directs the functions of both the military and the state.

It is within this environment that the Revolutionary Professional Soldier can be found. His function is to participate in the daily administration of all economic, political, and social aspects of the state, while simultaneously serving as the protector of the state, the party, and the revolutionary ideology that is the basis of the ongoing revolution.

Revolutionary Professional Soldiers are purposefully politicized by the party they serve. This fact allows them to act as a powerful ally in relation to issues concerning either potential or actual conflict within the institutions of state. Thus, participation of the military in the political process is tolerated more in revolutionary societies than in states with stable well established political orders.

The diffuseness of the boundaries between the civil and the military institutions is acknowledged by both soldiers and politicians as being legitimate.³

The relationship of the party to the military is influenced by the hegemonic status of the dominant socialist party. Additionally, the absence of constitutional means to transfer power within the state and the existence of paramilitary organizations both in and around the regular military forces combine to make the Revolutionary Professional Soldier subordinate to a movement, party, or regime that is certainly more resilient than his own institution. His roles within the government are numerous. They include: guardian of communist party legitimacy and ideological heritage, preserving the status quo, maintaining the balance of power within the revolutionary government, enforcer of political and constitutional mandates, quasi-revolutionary agent of the party in bordering states, and defender of the homeland.

In the revolutionary state it is only the Revolutionary Professional Soldier that is able to achieve both professional proficiency and pride, as well as a high social status. In, short, Revolutionary Professional Soldiers see themselves as members of the masses, which helps to explain why they do not exercise governmental power themselves. Over time, the relationship between the

³Despite the influence gained by their positions in the governing structure, Revolutionary Professional Soldiers never use the threat of a coup d'etat as a bargaining tool. His ability to cope with the revolutionary environment and his influential role in the realm of foreign and defense policy are partial explanations of his failure to intervene. See Perlmutter and LeoGrande, pp. 786-788.

Revolutionary Professional Soldier and the hegemonic Marxist-Leninist party can evolve. The evolution, if it takes place, involves three separate types of civil-military relationships - fused, symbiotic, and coalitional. Each is characterized by the following definitions.

A fused relationship is one noted for a lack of either a truly hegemonic Marxist-Leninist party. It is one where the military and political functions struggle are accomplished by a single entity. Additionally, the initial entity that assumes power after the revolution is incapable of fulfilling the duties of both administrator and defender of the state. Castro's 26th of July Movement revolution in Cuba is cited as an ideal example of this type of relationship.⁴

A symbiotic relationship is one of living together, a partnership involving one another, and is associated with the survival of each institutional structure. It is a system of high dependance more than of mutual benefits. Symbiotic relationships are characterized by low levels of difference between military and non-military elites. This allows for extensive circulation of middle and lower level administrators in both institutions, due to the relative obscurity of institutional boundaries. This same level of integration is difficult to sustain after the revolution ends and priority of the government shifts from survival to domestic reform. Due to an emerging division of labor between the military and civilian sectors, boundaries begin to appear and the level of interdependence begins to

⁴Ibid, p. 785.

increase. The Chinese revolution under Mao Zadong is cited as an ideal case study of this type of relationship.⁵

A coalitional relationship is one based on a desire to secure mutual benefit for each of the institutions of state involved. In order for the benefits to be attained and the social status of the institutions to be maintained, the state must be facing a combination of internal and external adversaries. Despite the specific nature of the threats faced by the state, institutional autonomy is the greatest concern of each group. This is possible because of a high degree of military technological complexity requiring specialized knowledge not available to civilian elites. This high degree of autonomy concerning defense related matters, creates a high degree of autonomy within the military. The Russian revolution of the Bolsheviks in 1917 which lead to the creation of the Soviet Union is cited as an ideal case study in this type of relationship.⁶

⁵Ibid, pp. 784-784.

⁶Ibid, pp. 782-784.

III. HISTORICAL INFLUENCES ON REVOLUTIONARY MODEL

Contrary to what most Americans may believe, 2 July 1976⁷ is not the first time that Vietnam had been an independent sovereign state. It had in fact existed as a separate and independent empire for nearly a thousand years prior its conquest by France in 1885.

In this chapter, I explore the geographical, cultural, and colonial influences that are an important part of the Vietnamese historical landscape. It provides the uninitiated with a basic understanding of the forces at work in Vietnam during its pre-revolutionary period. After all, it is within this geographical and historical framework that the Communist Revolution of 1945 began.

The following pages provide an example of how the Vietnamese throughout their long history of revolution have used small unit operations, nationalism as a uniting ideology, cooperation between the social classes, and the notion of mass struggle to defeat all would be conquerors. The final revolution, in 1976, must therefore be considered in terms of the geographical, historical, and political

⁷The is much discussion as to the exact time that "Vietnam" became a separate identity. Dates such as 939 AD and 21 July 1954 are some commonly mentioned in studies of Vietnam. I subscribe to the notion of the first unified "Vietnam" under Emperor Gia Long in 1802 since it is the first to unify all three of the ancient kingdoms that make up modern Vietnam and the first to use the name Viet-Nam to describe itself. See Chester A. Bain, Vietnam: The Roots of Conflict, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), pp. 80-81.

factors which shaped the mind set of the individuals who came to embody the Revolutionary Professional Soldier ethos.

A. GEOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Starting at China's southern border and extending all the way to the tip of the Indochinese Peninsula, the territory of present-day Vietnam⁸, occupies the eastern boundary of Southeast Asia, in a shape reminiscent of a lazy "S". It is bordered to the north by the Guangxi and Yunnan provinces of China; to the east and south by the South China Sea, and to the west by Cambodia and Laos. Vietnam is approximately the size of the state of Florida with an estimated population of 70 million.⁹ Stretching nearly 1,650 kilometers long, the country undulates to widths ranging between 50 and 500 km's and covers a total land area of 331,688 square kilometers.¹⁰

Comprehending the geographic configuration of the land is extremely significant if one is to understand the movement of people and armies in ancient, as well as modern times. Vietnam's topography is dominated by two fertile alluvial river deltas - the Red River in the north and the Mekong in the south. Both of these areas have traditionally been known for their intensive

⁸Refer to Map 1.

⁹1993 Socialist Republic of Vietnam Census estimate based on an annual increase of 960,000.

¹⁰Department of the Army, Vietnam: A Country Study. Area Studies Handbook, DA PAM 550-32, (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1989), p. 84.

agriculture and have historically produced the bulk of the rice required to support the needs of the population.¹¹ A narrow strip of smaller costal plains connects these two larger and more productive plains.

For most of their history, the core-Vietnamese¹² people lived primarily in the Red River Delta region. Over the course of history, the Vietnamese gradually expanded southward into the Mekong Delta region. Its conquest was completed by the middle of the 18th century thus creating the modern borders of Vietnam. The primarily reason for this strict southward movement was the existence of the Annamite Cordillera. This mountain range runs in a generally north-south direction along the modern Vietnamese borders with Laos and Cambodia. At certain points along the chain, mountain peaks attain elevations of over 10,000 feet. This natural obstacle has historically limited the east-west movement of settlers, refugees, and armies alike between Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos to only a few difficult mountain passes. This geographic isolation helped create a sense of "Viet" nationalism. These natural boundaries allowed the Vietnamese to ward off invasion from all but the strongest of enemies, such as the colonial powers and its northern neighbor, China.

¹¹The Red River Delta, unlike its southern counterpart the Mekong, however, has long since reached its optimum agricultural expansion. See *Ibid*, p. 155.

¹²I refer to those tribes that make up the ethnic group associated with Vietnam's Red River Delta. Other ethnic groups were living in this area, but are considered of a different ethnic line. See Department of the Army, Minority Groups in the Republic of Vietnam. Ethnographic Study Series, DA PAM 550-105, (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1966) for more details.

Trading space for time has traditionally been a viable tactic in the Vietnamese political and military arsenal of weapons. The mountainous and rural areas of the country have long proven themselves to be viable safe areas. Occupation forces have traditionally focused their efforts on controlling the urban centers while leaving the densely forested and impenetrable swamps to a host of rebel groups, mountain tribes, and bandits alike.

The natural environment also serves as a weapon against would be invaders. The monsoon rains flood turn small streams into rivers and rivers into raging torrents. The wide expanses of mangrove swaps also limited movement in the deltas and along the coastline. The effects of overpowering heat and humidity have proven deadly to unacclimated foreign troops, especially when combined with the ravages of malaria and jungle rot.

B. THE CHINESE INFLUENCE

Throughout history the Vietnamese have often disagreed about what the true essence of their nation is, however, all seem to agree that their nation is not under any circumstances to be considered a dependency of China. Yet, none can dispute China's influential role in every period of Vietnamese history. China overshadows Vietnam geographically, demographically, linguistically, culturally, and politically. Other states have influenced Vietnam's development for brief periods of time - the French, Dutch, Japanese, and United States, but all have left

beaten and demoralized. China alone is and always has been maintained a constant presence.

The millennium of direct Chinese rule (111 BC-975 AD) saw a flood of Chinese refugees entering the Red River Delta region. These were not peasant farmers fleeing oppressive landlords, however, but rather well-accomplished scholars, government officials, and wealthy merchants who had fallen out of favor with the Chinese government under Wang Mang (AD 9-23).¹³

During the settlement process, the Chinese established themselves as agents of modernization and introduced their literary classics, Confucian ethics, Chinese ideographs, the art of printing, the minting of coins, silkworms, and porcelain manufacturing to the people of the region. The Mahayana form of Buddhism was also introduced to Vietnam by Chinese scholars and preachers beginning in the fifth century AD. It competed very successfully with the local Vietnamese forms of religion.

Despite these influences, it is difficult to measure the depth of assimilation of Chinese culture by the Vietnamese. During this period many Vietnamese adopted outward signs of assimilation, dress, hair style, and religion being a few examples but also adapted Chinese ways to meet their own needs.¹⁴ The impact of the Chinese Mandarin system, however, did have a visible and lasting impact

¹³Nguyen Kac Vien, Traditional Vietnam: Some Historical Stages, (Hanoi: Hanoi Institute of Historical Studies, No Date), p. 23.

¹⁴Ibid, p. 24.

on Vietnam. Its Confucian values, helped the Vietnamese elite further erect a wall of authority that tended to buttress their dominate social and economic position vis-a-vis the peasantry. This aspect of Chinese culture would play a significant role in the scope of future revolutions.

These same factors also bred an air of condescension toward people of other walks of life and a tendency to look to the past for precedents to solve current problems. It was also a way of thinking that considered non-Confucian outsiders as barbarians. Vietnamese relations with the western powers during the colonial period must be seen against this backdrop of a constrictive Chinese legacy. It was into this environment that the first colonial powers entered Vietnam.

C. THE COLONIAL EXPERIENCE

For the first two centuries of their presence in Asia, the French were far more successful in their religious activities than in establishing trade or the acquisition of new colonial territories.¹⁵ Despite a long history of involvement in Vietnam, it was not until the mid-1800's that the French were able to make major

¹⁵The French were not the first Europeans to reach Vietnam. It was the Portuguese who first found the route around the Cape of Good Hope and sailed to the coast of Vietnam in the middle of the sixteenth century. As the Portuguese fortunes declined, their monopoly of the eastern trade was broken. By the middle of the seventeenth century both the Dutch and English had established trading posts in Hanoi. See Joseph Buttinger, Vietnam: A Political History, (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1969), pp. 55-66.

territorial gains.¹⁶ These gains came partly as a pretense to protect French nationals (chiefly missionaries), but primarily as a function of continued European expansionism. The initial religious success of the French, however, was short lived as Catholic values and ideas began to be viewed as a direct threat to their power by the ruling Vietnamese kings.¹⁷ Such an attitude was enhanced by continued missionary involvement in court politics. During this sixty year period, hostility toward Catholics and foreign influences in general continued to increase.

After several missteps, the French set up a permanent "establishment" in Vietnam following the military expedition of 1860. French military forces then used this area as a base from which to launch a series of conquests: 1862: half of Cochinchina; 1863: most of Cambodia; 1867: the rest of Cochinchina; 1883: Annam; 1885: Tonkin; 1893: Laos; and in 1907: the Siamese Provinces of Cambodia. This series of military conquests finally gave the French what they had so long desired, control of a resource rich and militarily strategic outpost at the crossroads of Asian civilization, but more importantly at the crossroads of the very lucrative Asian spice trade.¹⁸

¹⁶The French East India Company was established in 1664. This was followed in 1669 by the establishment of a French trading office in Vietnam at Pho Hien. See *Ibid*, p. 59.

¹⁷Particularly Emperor Minh Mang (1820-1841) and his successors Thieu Tri (1841-1847) and Tu Duc (1847-1883). See *Ibid*, 74.

¹⁸Francis J. Corley, "Viet-Nam Since Geneva." Thought. Volume XXXIII, Number 131 (Winter 1958-59), pp. 516-517.

The French, like the Chinese before them, tried to impose their own set of religious, cultural, economic, and administrative standards on the Vietnamese. The tenant farmer based agricultural system was replaced with one based on plantations. No longer were traditional crops grown to support local needs, but rather new crops were cultivated to support the needs of the international export market.¹⁹ The French groomed an elite class of second and third tier administrators to operate in the areas beyond direct French control, in much the same way the Chinese had tried to run Vietnam. The results were also similar. This approach breed a sense of dissatisfaction within the elite and non-elite groups as neither group viewed itself as benefiting from the new social and economic arrangement. These changes only served to reinforce their sense that the French were just another oppressive invader. The combination of a lack of emphasis placed on the traditional Confucian classic's²⁰ and the disruption of the traditional power structures within the village system sowed seeds of discontent that would come to bloom under communist nurturing in the near future.

Prior to the beginning of World War II, the French administrative mandate over IndoChina consisted of six political units²¹. Vietnamese national sentiment,

¹⁹Samuel L. Popkin, The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 171-172.

²⁰The last national traditional Confucian Civil Service Examination was held in 1919. See Vietnam: A Country Study, p. 103.

²¹The colony of Cochinchina in the south of Vietnam, four protectorates, the Kingdoms of Laos and Cambodia, the Annamite Empire, and Tonkin, and finally the territory of Kwangchowan at the northwestern end of the Luichow Peninsula in south

which had never fully accepted Chinese domination a millennium earlier, was no more willing to accept a European overlord in modern times. The result was a series of local rebellions against the colonial mandate.

D. SUMMARY

Two essential elements contributed to the molding of the early Vietnamese social organization, the struggle against nature and the struggle against would be conquerors. The rugged physical geography of the region has made subsistence agriculture a way of life. The Vietnamese peasant was required to scratch out a living between monsoon rains and drought. All the while, subject to an unending series of conquests from both regional and European powers.

China always has and always will have a great deal of influence over Vietnam. They were the ones to introduce Confucian ethics and increase the development of an elite class. The traditional fear of invasion found in the Vietnamese originated with its early interaction with the Chinese. Although conquered militarily, the Vietnamese never allowed themselves to be totally oppressed by the dominant Chinese. It was during the years of direct Chinese rule that the Vietnamese developed the strategy of "adapt and wait until the time is right, then rise up and revolt".

The French colonial experience saw the total exploitation of both the people and resources of Vietnam. Once again Vietnam had been invaded by a "lesser

China. See Corley, p. 517.

"race" and forced to adapt to a set of foreign values. During this period, traditional Vietnamese forms of government, religion, agriculture, and social structure were all disrupted. Again the Vietnamese people adapted to their surroundings and waited for the right time to revolt against this newest of would be conqueror's.

E. CONCLUSIONS

The impacts of the geographic, environmental, and historical factors discussed had a definitive impact on the development of a Vietnamese mind set that was conducive to the introduction of the Revolutionary Professional Soldier concept. The Vietnamese traditions of mass struggle, a deep sense of "Viet" nationalism, distrust of everything foreign, and historical sense of impending invasion combined with their willingness to sacrifice for the greater good of the nation, laid the groundwork for the integration of political and military systems long before the Communist lead Revolution of August 1945.

IV. ORGANIC REVOLUTIONARY INFLUENCES

Given the geographical and historical influences noted in the previous chapter, it is now appropriate to discuss the modern influences that impacted the birth of the modern state of Vietnam. Prior to beginning this analysis, however, one aspect of the definition provided in Chapter II remains constant throughout the period covered by this analysis and therefore is examined in closer detail. In this way the analysis that follows can concentrate its efforts on areas of difference and not on areas of commonality. The aspect of the definition that has remained constant deals with the issue of political dominance.

Since its inception, the party has been the dominant institution, both in relation to its civilian counterpart the state bureaucracy and the military. Douglas Pike describes the relationship this way:

Within the People's Army of Vietnam is, as there has been, the party. Known by various names over the years, the Vietnamese Communist Party inside PAVN is the steel rod in a ferro-concrete building, the ever-present goading conscience, an eternal looming specter.²²

Included in this aspect of an all powerful and dominant political party is the notion of legitimate military involvement in the political realm. Throughout the initial periods of civil-military development in Vietnam, military involvement in politics and vice versa was not only accepted, but was in fact encouraged and in

²²Douglas Pike, PAVN: The People's Army of Vietnam, (New York: Presido Press, 1986), p. 145.

some instances required.²³ Key leadership positions in both institutions have also traditionally been held by the same small group of individuals. Each one of these aspects is more fully defined in the pages that follow.

A. HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE REVOLUTION

The fundamental factor influencing the lives of the Vietnamese is now and always has been struggle. Struggle against the forces of nature, Chinese hegemony, corrupt local officials and ruthless warlords, and European colonial powers. All the while, Vietnam was struggling to either attain or maintain its independence. This was true for Vietnam all the way from its earliest existence up to its conquest by France. Despite the "enlightened" administration of Vietnam by the French, described in the previous section, the life of the common peasant had not improved significantly during the course of the past few hundred of years.²⁴ The common peasant still subsisted on a meager ration of rice and nuoc mam (fish paste) in a shelter constructed using scraps of wood and bamboo or clods of dirt. He had a life expectancy of not more than thirty years during which he was prey to every variety of tropical disease, from malaria to the plague. In addition to disease, he had two other enemies, his landlord and the local government, both were all powerful and ever present. To the landlord he owed

²³Ho Chi Minh, On Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-66, Edited by Bernard B. Fall, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1967), pp. 139-140.

²⁴James C. Scott, The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 10.

an ever increasing share of his already meager crop as payment for rent. To his "government" he owed a never ending series of taxes for which he got almost nothing in return, and if caught in a recruiting sweep, a tour of duty in the imperial army.²⁵ Somehow, this age old misery combined with an undying sense of nationalistic spirit to plant the seed from which the Revolutionary Professional Soldier was to grow.

The years leading up to World War I saw new political and ideological movements beginning to take shape inside Vietnam. These movements, as history has shown, were based on the idea of Vietnamese nationalism but one that was being influenced by external ideologies as well. As World War I began, the Vietnamese people soon learned the costs associated with being a colony were not just domestic in nature. An additional duty they faced was to go off and help fight the masters wars. Thousands of Vietnamese nationals were shipped to Europe to serve in the Allied lines during World War I, but not allowed to serve as regular combat units. Instead they were assigned tasks such as digging trenches, loading ammunition, and other manual labor duties.²⁶

While serving in Europe many of the Vietnamese were for the first time exposed to cultures other than their own. These individuals found the concepts of

²⁵Ibid, pp. 44-52 and 104-105.

²⁶An exact number is not available. Estimates are that approximately 100,000 men were sent to France. 50,000 were served as laborers and another 50,000 as combat support personnel. See Vietnam: A Country Study, p. 37.

western democracy and socialist ideology new and extremely applicable to their own desires for self-rule. Upon returning to Vietnam they began to ask why the France of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity", for whom they had fought and died, did not apply these same lofty ideals to their colonial subjects.²⁷ Ho Chi Minh (aka: Nguyen Ai Quoc, Nguyen Sinh Cung, Nguyen Tat Thanh, and Ly Thuy) was one such individual.²⁸

B. EARLY POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

During the early 1900's, numerous revolts took place in Vietnam. All tended to be small in scale, unorganized, and lacking broad national support. Because of their unorganized nature, these uprisings were suppressed easily by the French military and police forces of the local area. Despite the unsuccessful nature of these early revolts, they were a harbinger of more serious tests of French administrative resolve to come. A few individuals were watching and learning from the mistakes of these early would be revolutionaries.

One such individual was Phan Boi Chau. He is cited by Vietnamese historians as having made immeasurable contributions to the attainment of Vietnamese independence and helping Ho Chi Minh develop his revolutionary

²⁷Ho, pp. 5-8.

²⁸D.R. SarDesai, Vietnam: The Struggle for National Identity, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), p. 49.

strategy.²⁹ He was the first to develop a broad based organization to promote Vietnamese independence, the Vietnam Public Offering Society (VPOS). He was also the first national political figure to advocate the use of violent means to force a French withdrawal from Vietnam.³⁰ He carefully noted the successes and failures of other Asian revolutionaries.³¹ Although his were not totally "new" ideas, they had not yet been applied to the Vietnamese situation. Despite, his unique perspective, Chau failed to bring about his objective of Vietnamese independence. His major failure was in not involving the Vietnamese peasant class, who at the time were the most disgruntled and made up approximately 80% of the total population. Rather, he focused his efforts on enlisting the support of the scholar gentry class, believing the peasants would automatically rise up on their own following the lead of the upper classes.³²

²⁹As a child young Nguyen Ai Quoc would spend hours sitting at Chou's feet listening to him read Vietnamese poetry. See David G. Marr, Vietnamese Anticolonialism, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 255.

³⁰A scholar from Nghe An Province, trained in Confucian tradition by his father and local teachers. Took his regional examination with highest honors. Founded both the Vietnam Public Offering Society, 1907 and the Vietnam Restoration Society, 1912. See William J. Duiker, The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 32-33 and 49-50 and 69-70.

³¹Chau had become encouraged by the early successes of Sun Yat-Sen in China during this same time period. He is the first of many Vietnamese revolutionaries to look to China as a model. This same tactic would be followed by his former student Ho Chi Minh during the rise of Mao Zedong in the 1930's and 1940's. See Marr, p. 149.

³²Ibid, pp. 44-45.

Chou's was not the only political organization to take shape during this period. A Constitutional Party, made up of elite landowners, rich businessmen, heads of industry, and top civil servants also attempted to pressure the French to withdraw from Vietnam. This organization, however, advocated a peaceful strategy of economic pressure, but suffered from the same shortcoming as the earlier party's noted. It too did not involve the masses, and therefore was unable to garner support outside of its already limited client base.³³ The decline of both of these early political organizations, however, coincided with the emergence of a new force in Vietnamese domestic politics that of a growing worker class.

Due in large part to French economic practices put in place to support the material needs of World War I, for the first time, a working class was developing in Vietnam. It was made up of factory, textile, and mill workers, who were gaining a sense of self-awareness while growing in numbers, which in turn gave them additional political strength. By 1925, the workers, who were for the most part still unorganized, were only able to influence issues at the local level. Despite their local nature, however, they proved themselves to be a formidable opponent by conducting several successful wildcat strikes against the French colonial administration and individual businesses.³⁴

³³Duiker, pp 135-138 and 184-186.

³⁴One such strike was in August of 1925 by workers belonging to an underground union at the Ba Son naval arsenal in Saigon-Cholon, under the guise of requesting higher wages, but was actually a show of support for striking Chinese workers. The strikers were able to block the deployment of two warships the French authorities wanted to

Emboldened by what they saw taking place among the working class, two new groups attempted to set up viable mass oriented political parties in Vietnam. The first was started in 1925 by Ho Chi Minh and was called the Association of Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth (RYL) - Viet Nam Thanh Nien Cach Menh Dong Chi Hoi.³⁵ The second was founded in December of 1927 by Nguyen Thai Hoc, a teacher from a Vietnamese peasant family in Hanoi and was called the Vietnamese Nationalists Party - Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang - (VNQDD).³⁶ Both the RYL and the VNQDD were strong national movements with broad support from all classes of people.³⁷ Their formation, capitalized on a general sense of unrest present in Vietnam, caused in part by the worsening of global economic conditions and also by the already intolerable living conditions of the peasant and working classes.

When the effects of the worldwide depression began to be felt at home, French investors withdrew their money from Vietnam. Correspondingly, workers

send to Shanghai to end the Chinese strike. In November to this same year, flush with their success, these same workers held a massive rally to protest the arrest of Phan Boi Chau in Shanghai. See Vietnam: A Country Study, p. 40.

³⁵To get the money he needed to start this organization, Ho betrayed his youth idol Phan Boi Chau to the French for a reward of 100,000 piasters. See SarDesai, p. 51.

³⁶Ibid, p. 49.

³⁷France's attempt to reassert its authority over IndoChina in 1946-1946 effectively eliminated this group as a rival to the Communists. Once the VNQDD was gone, the Viet Minh remained without rivals. See J.L.S. Girling, People's War: Conditions and Consequences in China and South East Asia, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1969), p. 13.

salaries fell by 30 - 50 percent, and full time employment dropped by approximately 33 percent in Vietnam. The international market prices of rice, rubber, and coal - Vietnam's only cash crops - plummeted in value. French fortunes were lost over night and business empires lay in ruin, but in the end, as always, it was the Vietnamese peasant who bore most of the burden.³⁸ Because of the hyper-inflation that followed he was forced to give up twice as much of his crop, just to pay the same amount of taxes or other debts. This man made disaster was compounded by series of monsoon induced floods which caused widespread famine and food riots throughout the countryside as farmers refused to give up even greater shares of their crops to taxation.³⁹

All of these factors only served to further fan the flames of Vietnamese resistance to domination, French or otherwise. The age old Vietnamese desire for independence had yet to be extinguished by any would be conqueror. Numerous small rebel groups had maintained a constant spirit of rebellion since the start of the colonial period. They, like their predecessors under the rule of China, did not shrink from violence when it appeared necessary or useful.⁴⁰ The groundwork was being laid during this time for the emergence of the communists as the first true "revolutionary" organization. It appeared in the form of the Indochinese

³⁸Ho Chi Minh, "On the Condition of the Peasants in Vietnam", as cited in Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works (4 Vol's.; Hanoi, 1960-1962), I, pp. 62-65.

³⁹Duiker, pp. 218-219.

⁴⁰Popkin, pp. 247-248.

Communist Party (ICP). The ICP was formed from a number of smaller organizations, including the RYL, by Ho as an attempt to gain greater influence over the liberation movements already underway in various parts of Vietnam. Under one or more of its various forms, the ICP was able to operate in the open during the first fourteen or so years of its existence.⁴¹ There were periods of crackdown by French authorities when the party was associated with violent strikes or insurrection. Many of its early leaders spent many years in prison for purely political reasons. World events were soon to force the ICP on a course not of its own choosing, but one that would eventually lead it to victory.

There was but one factor missing to begin the final revolution, a common foe. One whom all Vietnamese, regardless of social class, religion, or ethnic background could acknowledge as illegitimate. Fate would soon deliver this last requirement to Ho in the form of the Japanese.

C. WORLD WAR II

On 10 August 1939, Germany and Russia signed a non-aggression pact. This act gave the French administrators an excuse to declare all communist organizations illegal and further crackdown on opposition political and labor

⁴¹The founding conference of the first Indochinese Communist Party (ICP, Dang Cong San Dong Duong) was held on 17 June 1929, in Hanoi. On 3 February 1930 Ho Chi Minh presided over the meeting where the unified Vietnamese Communist Party (Viet Nam Cong San Dang) VCP was founded. The name was later changed back to the Indochinese Communist Party. See Duiker, pp. 211-214.

forces in Vietnam.⁴² This turn of events forced the ICP to shift the focus of its activities from the urban industrial centers to the countryside, where French administrative control was significantly weaker. Because of the need to build the widest possible base of support for their cause, throughout the war years, the communists adopted a strategy that welcomed support from the middle class and even the landlord class. However, it was made very clear by Uncle Ho that the primary focus of the party would remain tied to the needs of the Vietnamese peasant class.⁴³

After the French surrender in June of 1940, the Japanese demanded access to Vietnamese ports, military facilities, and the right to transport troops via Vietnamese rail systems to any destination they desired. In return for these privileges, the Japanese would recognize Vichy French authority and administration of IndoChina.⁴⁴ As the Vichy French reestablished control and the Japanese moved their forces into Vietnam, ICP organizations and their sister "military" units retreated to safe areas in the mountains and swamps. In these safe areas, they refined their political ideology, recruited and trained a new generation of political cadre, regrouped units that had been attrited by combat, and began a series of small coordinated attacks against both the French and the Japanese. All of these activities were designed to build a base of legitimacy among the

⁴²Vietnam, A Country Study, p. 45.

⁴³Ho, On Revolution, pp. 130-132.

⁴⁴Vietnam, A Country Study, pp. 45-47.

population for the mass uprising that would eventually come, which would naturally be lead by a vanguard ICP.⁴⁵

D. EARLY POLITICAL-MILITARY UNITS

During the first few years of the war, most of the paramilitary organizations fighting the French and Japanese were no more than armed guerrilla bands. They tended to be composed predominately of ethnic minority groups who were for the first time being integrated with the political refugees forced to take sanctuary in the highlanders traditional homelands.⁴⁶ The Japanese occupation of Vietnam, provided the ICP with the missing ingredient it required to establish itself as the sole true defender of Vietnamese nationalistic spirit. To accomplish this aim, however, the ICP would have to now integrate the traditional forces of nationalism, united struggle against foreign invaders, and the rebellious nature of the Vietnamese peasant class into a coordinated strategy.

Ho and his key supporters decided the only way to accomplish their goals was to temporarily set aside their more radical socialist goals and out of necessity placed the struggle for national independence ahead of all other concerns. This was done in order to gain the broad based support they knew they would need in order to first hold out against the Japanese then defeat the French. To accomplish this "military" goal, the ICP created the League for the Independence of Vietnam

⁴⁵Girling, pp. 128-129.

⁴⁶Pike, p. 39.

(Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi) or "Viet Minh". The true value of the Viet Minh was as a front organization for the ICP. Unlike the ICP, the Viet Minh was able to win the support of the other patriotic elements (like the Army of National Salvation) already operating in various parts of Vietnam. Despite operating under a different name, the Viet Minh would be under the complete control and direction of the ICP. This was accomplished by appointing ICP members to all key Viet Minh leadership positions.

Ho and his "military" advisor Vo Nguyen Giap⁴⁷ also realized that conducting guerrilla warfare type operations alone would not accomplish their goal. What they needed was a way to combine both of their main objectives - socialist education of the masses and military defeat of the Japanese and French. Following the lead of his ideological brother to the north, Mao Zedong, Ho described his philosophy for the Viet Minh as follows:

Political action is more important than military action; propaganda is more important than fighting.⁴⁸

With this in mind, Giap began setting up Viet Minh self defense forces in all villages under their control, under the direct supervision of the party.⁴⁹ They also decided to set up a secure base of operations near Cao Bang.⁵⁰ This area was

⁴⁷A history professor with no formal military training.

⁴⁸Pike, p. 31.

⁴⁹Ibid, pp. 27-28.

⁵⁰Refer to Map 2.

chosen because it combined of the advantage of easily defendable terrain with proximity to a secure logistics support base, southern China. It served as a political-military indoctrination site from which trained cadre and military units would be sent out to operate in areas under French or Japanese control. These new "politically configured" military units were called Armed Propaganda Teams.⁵¹ They were specifically designed to do mobilization work in remote villages but were also capable of engaging enemy units in combat if necessary. They operated under the "propaganda of the deed" concept in order to gain the support of the masses, Uncle Ho deemed so necessary to a successful revolution.

These independently operating forces were later united by Giap into what was called the Vietnam Liberation Army (VLA), the precursor of the modern People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN),⁵² so as to downplay the role of the nationalists. By 1944, Ho and Giap were in complete control of the Viet Minh. During this period, the ICP continued to expand its political base of support throughout the country by establishing a series of National Salvation Associations (NSA's).⁵³ These organizations targeted specific segments of the population, women, workers, youth, and others. They were a way for these groups to aid in

⁵¹Pike, pp. 30-31.

⁵²Ibid, pp. 32-33.

⁵³Douglas Pike explains the term in the following manner: "The term national salvation (cuu quoc) has special emotive qualities for all Vietnamese. It was the organizing instrument used to rally support against French and then the Japanese in World War II. Many of the resistance movements in Vietnam today employ the term in their names." See Pike, pp. 24-25 and p. 37.

the independence movement without leaving the social mainstream or entering into direct combat. Ho understood the need for broad based support both in the active and passive resistance movement.

As the end of World War II became more apparent, the ICP began to make plans for the final mass revolt that would carry them to victory and independence. The conditions in Vietnam were only now right for a mass uprising, famine had gripped the countryside and unemployment was rampant in the cities. Mass unrest caused by unsuitable living conditions was growing due to the weakness of the Japanese position. Shortly after the dropping of the second atomic bomb on Japan, the ICP issued a call for a general uprising.⁵⁴ Within one week of the uprising, most of the provincial capitals in the north were under the control of ICP factions. On 28 August 1945, the formation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) was announced. Ho Chi Minh would become both President and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Vo Nguyen Giap, his chief military strategist throughout the struggle, was to become Minister of the Interior. The highest political and the highest military leaders, all of whom belonged to the ICP, would now begin to shape the new Vietnamese state.

On 2 September 1945, President Ho read the Vietnamese Declaration of Independence to a crowd of over half a million supporters, closing with a request to the allied powers to recognize the right of the Vietnamese to self rule and

⁵⁴To review the text of this speech, refer to Ho Chi Minh, On Revolution, pp. 141-142.

independence.⁵⁵ Thus the first combined political-military revolution in Vietnamese history ended, with the mass uprising all previous revolutionary leaders had sought. The conclusion of hostilities between the Vietnamese and the Japanese, however, was only a prelude to an even greater struggle to come.

E. SUMMARY

As the preceding pages show, the Revolutionary Professional Soldier ethos did not spring from whole cloth overnight like the revolutions that took place in Russia, China, and Israel. Unlike the revolutions cited in the Perlmutter and LeoGrande work, where the entire prior history of the society was wiped away overnight by the revolution, in Vietnam many aspects of the Vietnamese society already conformed to the socialist structure, and accordingly remained in place after the revolution. The development of the Revolutionary Professional Soldier ethos was not only a product of the communist revolution, but of thousands of years of physical and cultural domination and struggle. It was in fact born of both organic Vietnamese beliefs that were later molded by modern socialist organizational structures.

The first political and military units to begin striving toward the goal of Vietnamese independence were unorganized, lacked a coherent strategy, and had only limited regional or class based support. These groups eventually were eliminated by French authorities or other rival groups. However, with each

⁵⁵Ibid, pp. 143-145.

generation that passed, their operations became more sophisticated and successful. Finally culminating with the formation and emergence of the Vietnamese Communist Party, albeit under a series of different names and operational structures.

F. CONCLUSIONS

It was during this period of history that the foundation of the Revolutionary Professional Soldier concept took shape in Vietnam. One can only discuss the "concepts" as there was no formal civil or military structures in existence to analyze. A party had formed, but was one of clandestine illegitimate operations. In this respect, a military did exist, but was little more than a collection of armed teams with a mission of propaganda, not combat. Despite these structural shortcomings, Ho and Giap were able to stoke the fires of nationalism in the hearts of the population and bring Socialism to Vietnam, under the guise of independence.

With these historical influences in mind, I will now conduct an examination of the nature of the Party-Military relations in post independence Vietnam using the model outlined in Chapter II. For it is only with an understanding of the events of past, can one understand the present situation in Vietnam.

V. THE PERIOD OF CIVIL-MILITARY EVOLUTION

This chapter is an attempt to discern the specific nature of the civil-military relationship manifest during three critical periods of Vietnamese history which I call - the Struggle for Liberation - 1944 to 1954, the Period of National Unification and Consolidation - 1955 to 1982, and the Period of Reform - 1983 to 1993. Each period is analyzed in accordance with the specific type of civil-military relationship, defined in Chapter II, I feel most closely resembles that of the Vietnamese experience.

A. THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION: A FUSED RELATIONSHIP

In their writings, Perlmutter and LeoGrande state that the Fused relationship only applies to states that have combined the function of vanguard military with that of subservient political organization, as is the ideal case study the Cuban Revolution.⁵⁶ I contend, however, that a Fused relationship can also apply to states that combine a vanguard political element with a subservient military organization as in the case of Vietnam.⁵⁷ The key issue is not whether the political institution is dominant over the others, for that is a basic component of all three types of relationships, but rather that the functions of both have been

⁵⁶Perlmutter and LeoGrande, pp. 785-786.

⁵⁷This author had the opportunity to discuss this specific issue with Dr William LeoGrande on 1 June 1994, at American University. He concurred with the definition as presented in the following paragraphs.

"fused" into one institution which then executes both political and military missions.

From the beginning of the Struggle for Liberation, all the way up to the closing days of the conflict, the specific nature of the civil-military relationship manifest was characteristic of that found in the Fused relationship I have defined. Specifically, in relation to the exceedingly low potential for conflict between political and military actors within the movement. This was due in large measure to the fact that all of the key political and military elites shared - a common historical/cultural background, philosophical link to communist ideology, and a common goal of independence from France.⁵⁸

In addition to these factors, there were no expressed political-military boundaries and little differentiation between the civil and military elements of the communist "state".⁵⁹ This finding is based on three specific observations made during the analysis process - 1) a noted lack of a military separate from the forces created by and functioning within the hegemonic Marxist-Leninist party, 2) the initial political organization that took power during the August Revolution was incapable of fulfilling the duties of state administrator and defender of the

⁵⁸William S. Turley, "Origins and Development of Communist Military Leadership in Vietnam," in Armed Forces and Society. Vol. 3, No. 2. February 1977, pp. 223-225.

⁵⁹During the period immediately following the end of World War II, the term "state" is a misnomer. The party organization was more a movement than a set of institutions. This would not change significantly until 1954, when the party consolidated its position.

homeland on the national scale, and 3) the actions of the party within the territory it controlled were in fact more praetorian than Leninist.

This contention can be seen clearly in the role played by the party in the development of a military strategy totally focused on political objectives, the historical background of top party officials who were first political leaders and second military commanders, the party's control over the class based requirements for selection of military officers, and the introduction of political cadre directly into the military chain of command. The military forces that came into existence during this period were creations of the party used initially for internal security, but later given a role in the armed expansion of the ideology.⁶⁰ This point is made clear by the fact that the 1959 Democratic Republic of Vietnam constitution did not even contain a heading for the armed forces. In fact, only one article, Article 8, mentioned the duties the armed forces were to perform. It reads:

... to safeguard the gains of the revolution and defend the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security of the Fatherland, and freedom, happiness, and peaceful labor of people⁶¹

The communists may have seized power in the vacuum left by the defeated Japanese during the August Revolution, but neither the party nor the military had attained the level of sophistication required to either administer or defend the newly independent state of Vietnam. Having operated solely in isolated areas of

⁶⁰Quang Vinh, "Birth of the People's Army Recounted", Vietnamese, No. 1, January 1974, pp. 82-89.

⁶¹Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

the countryside, overseeing the daily administration of villages and small rural districts in no way prepared the party to take on the responsibility of running an economically ravaged, agriculturally bankrupt, and ideologically divided state. Their lack of educated, skilled, and trained individuals to hold the offices of state left open by refugees fleeing southward, under the protection of Article 2 of the Geneva Agreements,⁶² and party imposed restrictions on the political trustworthiness of those individuals who stayed behind, taxed their already low pool of talent. Simply being the first one into the cities in no way imbues an organization with the talents and abilities required to administer the offices of state. This was as true for the Vietnamese as it was for Castro's 26 of July movement.

The last factor deals less with the potential capabilities of the party and more with the objective actions it took during the administration of the territories under its direct control. In this regard, one develops a much less utopian view of the living conditions in party controlled areas than that presented in party literature. I contend that the praetorian⁶³ aspects far outweighed the Leninist ones and despite the "hearts and minds" campaign waged by the communist forces in the rural

⁶²Marvin E. Gettleman, Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions, (New York: Signet, 1970), p. 164.

⁶³Specifically, I am referring to the actions of the Praetorian moderator type of military. In this case the Viet Minh portrayed themselves as saviors, promising to remedy and rectify past failures. See Eric A. Nordlinger, Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977), pp. 22-24.

areas, not all operations were focused on peasant literacy and community development. Routinely, individuals were required to gain permission from the local party boss to travel outside the village area, contact with other communities was strictly controlled, while agricultural production quotas and taxes were established for each community as part of their support for the war effort. Additionally, summary executions were the order of the day for suspected traitors and those considered "disloyal" to the cause. Also, "Education" consisted of ideological indoctrination and political awareness classes for every individual, regardless of his or her place in society. Finally, forced or rather coerced conscription was not an uncommon occurrence. Every facet of the lives of the population in the "liberated zones" was orchestrated to somehow enhance "the struggle", regardless of local sentiment.⁶⁴

Reviewed in their totality, the factors described above show the single focused nature of a Fused civil-military relationship. As stated, the specific nature of the civil-military relationship adjusts overtime to conform to both environmental and political dimensions. Such was the case in Vietnam as the fused relationship that had come into existence during the Struggle for Liberation gave way to a further evolution of Vietnamese civil-military relations.

⁶⁴Vietnam, A Country Study, pp. 105-107.

B. THE PERIOD OF NATIONAL UNIFICATION AND CONSOLIDATION: A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP

If the period of Struggle for Liberation came to be noted for a absence of expressed political-military boundaries and a lack of differentiation between the civil and military elements of state, then the period that followed, the Period of Unification and Consolidation, was remarkable for the degree of formalization that took place in both the political and military institutions of the newly independent North Vietnamese state. For the first time, a symbiotic civil-military relationship became apparent in Vietnam during the 1955 to 1982 time frame. It is during this period that the military institution is for the first time discernable as a viable entity unto itself, and not simply a sub-functional element of a single hegemonic institution present in Vietnam, the communist party. This had not been the case during either the conduct of the resistance movement of World War II or the Struggle for Liberation against the French.⁶⁵

Following the breakdown of the Geneva Agreements and the tit-for-tat recognition of both the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Republic of Vietnam by their respective Cold War patrons, the informal structure of both the party and the military were reorganized to match their new standing as official government institutions with in the framework of an independent sovereign state. Gone were the days when small ill trained and under equipped bands of men

⁶⁵Carlyle A. Thayer, "Vietnam", in Civil-Military Relations, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, Publishers, 1987), p. 235.

operated from clandestine basecamps in remote areas of the countryside in support of political objectives. Both the party and the military now had specific duties to perform and were thus required to take on the trappings of overt public servants.⁶⁶

In the years immediately following the Struggle for Liberation, the party embarked on a program to not just solidify their dominant position, but rather one intended to revolutionize the very socioeconomic structure of the state. The focus of the program was ideological in nature, but its primary motivation was, however, economic.⁶⁷

The program involved the creation of a totally new social structure. It was for the first time in Vietnamese history a true revolution. The party did not simply aim at changing the faces of the individuals holding the top leadership positions in the Vietnamese government, but instead focused on changing the very fabric of society. To accomplish this goal, all of the top party leaders appointed to the different state institutions had to cooperate with each other, while simultaneously creating a position for their own institution in the overall structure of the emerging socialist revolutionary state. During this period an atmosphere of mutual benefit

⁶⁶Pike, pp. 39-42.

⁶⁷Nguyen Van Canh, Vietnam Under Communism, 1975-1982, (Stanford: Hoover Institute Press, 1983), pp. 21-23.

prevailed. This was due to many reasons, a few of which were related to internal economic conditions faced by post war Vietnam.⁶⁸

It is then in this period of ideological fervor, nationalistic zeal, and political necessity that the characteristics of a symbiotic relationship were born. The following is a description of the aspects of the Vietnamese experience that cause this period to be associated with the symbiotic model.

In the social sciences, symbiosis means an organizational; structure with specialized functions that are related to one another in a division of labor. Symbiotic interaction is on all institutional levels, whereas a coalitional is rather restricted to the top elites. Symbiotic also implies modifications of each other's behavior for purposes of sustenance and survival; it is reciprocally advantageous and binds structures of different functions.⁶⁹

The Vietnamese civil-military relationship during the 1955 to 1982 period, meets these most basic requirements cited above. Additionally, although more structured and formal than the previous Fused type, civil-military relations during this period tended to take a more organic approach to inter-institutional relations than the coalitional period that followed. The symbiotic relationship that developed was a system of governance that placed the benefit of the revolutionary ideology ahead of the potential benefits of each institution. The three institutions of state developed a partnership ethos interacting with one another under the constant guidance of the party. The analysis that follows builds on these general themes as it details specific instances of interaction in Vietnam during this period.

⁶⁸Ho, On Revolution, pp. 290-297.

⁶⁹Perlmutter and LeoGrande, p. 784.

During the inter-war period (1955-1963), key leadership roles within the bureaucracy, the party, and the military continued to be held by the same small group of individuals that had orchestrated the Struggle for Liberation against the French.⁷⁰ Because none of the group were what could be classified as "professional soldiers or statesmen", other than perhaps Ho Chi Minh due to his extensive political education, there was a very low level of difference between military and nonmilitary elites. The core decision making body had all begun as political activists who, out of necessity, had taken up arms to support the party in its struggle. This small core group held all of the key posts in the party, the bureaucracy, and the military.

A second aspect relates to the theme of interrelatedness addressed above. Despite the presence of three functional institutions of state, their spheres of interest and functional specialties were not clearly defined. The party held a preeminent position among the institutions of state administration and national defense, of this there can be no doubt. It was the party, through the Plenum and Party Congresses that developed, wrote, and prepared all the laws, economic plans, and social welfare programs for Vietnam. However, the simplistic structure of the institutions, a lack of trained "politically correct" personnel, as well as the overlapping roles and missions of the three agencies combined to further obscure what few boundaries had developed.

⁷⁰Thayer, pp. 238-239.

Because of the shortage of trained personnel, the circulation of individuals between military and nonmilitary posts was a free flowing affair. Not only for the reasons stated above, but also because the demands placed on military and nonmilitary leaders during this period were not significantly greater than those they had faced during the Struggle for Liberation. Military tactics still involved the use of small units, operating in support of political goals in unchallenged regions of Vietnam. Throughout this period, the technological pace of the war remained primitive by western standards, despite the introduction of modern Soviet and US weapons systems into the theater.⁷¹ The leaders of the movement during this period had earned their places in society, the military, and the party structure by completing a test of fire against the French. They had first established their ideological credentials, then proven themselves in combat. Now they had military expertise to back up their ideological prowess. Following the party's "Red vs Expert"⁷² line of thinking, there was nothing such men could not do.

⁷¹Specifically, armor, rocket artillery, airplanes, and antiaircraft missile systems.

⁷²This is yet another aspect of the Chinese experience the Vietnamese adapted to their situation. Red refers to the desired level of ideological loyalty an individual is expected to attain with in the political sphere. Expert refers to the level of tactical and technical proficiency that an individual is expect to attain in order to perform his military or administrative duties. The ideal is an individual who combines both qualities, but if one must be stressed over the other, in the mind of the revolutionary, it is better to be Red than Expert. See Vo Nguyen Giap, Banner of the People's War, the Party's Military Line, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), pp. 38-39.

It was during this period that the military was for the first time assigned a "Dual Role".⁷³ In addition to its mission of protecting the state from invasion, the military was assigned economic construction and production tasks as well. Initially, due to a shortage of personnel, all state farms were placed under the control of the military. Military specialties were also matched to civilian equivalents in order to maximize the advantage of each institution. In this line, combat engineer units were sent out to repair roads and bridges while Infantry units put their vast pool of labor to use in community public work efforts. Military officers were also assigned to fill vacant billets in the state bureaucracy with increasing frequency.⁷⁴ In brief, the military was being trained to handle the defense of the nation along orthodox lines, while simultaneously playing a leading role in the economic and administrative development of Vietnam. This was due to its position as the largest repository of skilled manpower and material in Vietnam, all the while commanded by a dual military/party chain of command.

Despite this dual role, the military's primary task was still national defense. This task soon took on a new significance due to the activities of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia and the large quantities of military training and equipment being provided by the Soviet Union. Additionally, because of the Vietnam invasion of Cambodia and the ill treatment of the Chinese minority in Vietnam,

⁷³Refers to the integration of military units into the states planned economy. See Pike, p. 66.

⁷⁴Thayer, p. 250-254.

military and economic aid from China to Vietnam decreased drastically during this period. All Chinese aid ended as a result of the 1979 border war between Vietnam and China.⁷⁵

To make up for this loss of foreign aid, Vietnam developed closer ties to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union became both Vietnam's largest economic trading partner and supplier of military equipment and training assistance.⁷⁶ The presence of Soviet military and political advisors in Vietnam, combined with the large numbers of Vietnamese officials being sent to study in the Soviet Union, had a tremendous impact on the next type of civil-military relationship to develop in Vietnam.

In order to match its new legitimate status, the military became more conventional in appearance. To support the new equipment, ever increasing amounts of training time were given over to military science and technical studies. For the first time, a system of military rank was established and insignia to denote each rank was worn by military forces,⁷⁷ gone were the days of "leaders and followers". The military also became more hierarchical and centralized in order to support the larger and more powerful heavy divisions and corps sized units that were organized.⁷⁸

⁷⁵Vietnam: A Country Study, pp. 176-177.

⁷⁶Pike, pp. 256-257 and pp. 259-261.

⁷⁷Vietnam: A Country Study, p. 256.

⁷⁸Pike, p. 88.

The last factor concerns the Vietnamese experiences of the late 1970's and early 1980's. The level of integration and cooperation found in the symbiotic type of civil-military relationship is very difficult to sustain after the revolution ends. This was the case in Vietnam for several reasons. Specifically, without a common enemy to focus the energies of the population against, ethnic, religious, ideological, and class distinctions once again came to the fore.⁷⁹ Additionally, within the institutions of state, competition for ever scarcer resources caused institutional boundaries to appear and the circulation of elites between the institutions at all levels of government became more difficult. This too was due to a number of factors including, the increasing demands placed on key leaders in all three institutions by the technological revolution that hit Vietnam. The more sophisticated Vietnam became in terms of the international economic and regional security policies it advocated, the more the individuals tasked to institute these policies had to increase their personal level of sophistication. For the Vietnamese economy to operate effectively, both the requirement and the personnel to fill it, had to grow at an equal rate.⁸⁰

During both the War of Unification and the beginning of the War of Consolidation, the formal political and military institutions of the Vietnamese state worked in unison to accomplish the primary objective of the conflict. However,

⁷⁹Tran Khanh, The Ethnic Chinese and Economic Development in Vietnam, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), pp. 79-83.

⁸⁰Vietnam: A Country Study, pp. 147-151.

the outcome of each war had a profoundly different impact on not only civil-military relations but on the very soul of the nation as well. The successful unification of the nation accomplished by defeating both the US and the Republic of Vietnam, lifted the party and the military to new heights in the hearts and minds of the population. In the minds of the party leaders, their historic victory at unification, validated their brand of socialist revolutionary ideology.⁸¹ The invasion of Cambodia, although beginning with broad support, soon resulted in social and ideological kayos that combined with a lack of economic development, to cause the social position of both the party and the military to sink to new lows in the eyes of the Vietnamese population.⁸² The impact of this period on the evolutionary process from a symbiotic type of civil-military relationship to the present coalitional type is covered in the section that follows.

C. THE PERIOD OF REFORM: A COALITIONAL RELATIONSHIP

Building the country is closely linked with defending the country and building socialism must be closely linked with protecting socialism.⁸³

If, as I contend, the two previous periods of Vietnamese civil-military relations were characterized by a sense of "Revolutionary Spirit", then the Period

⁸¹Pike, p. 254.

⁸²Van Canh, pp. 97-112.

⁸³Lieutenant Colonel Luong Xuan Ba: "Organizing Militia, Self-Defense Forces Under Conditions of Multi-sectoral Economy" in TAP CHI QUOC PHONG TOAN DAN in Vietnamese Oct 93 pp 43-46. Translated in JPRS-SEA-94-002, 18 February 1994, pp. 25 - 27.

of Reform that followed is characterized by a growing sense of war fatigue, economic crisis, and ideological malaise. It is in this post-revolutionary period that a redefinition of the civil-military relationship took place within the three institutions of the Vietnamese socialist state. The symbiotic type of relationship that had existed during the Period of National Unification and Consolidation in turn evolved into a more formal coalitional type of civil-military relationship. The reasons for this movement up the continuum of civil-military evolution proceed from a fundamental shift in the nature of the relationship between the three institutions of state.

As in all "revolutionary states", in the period after the revolution ends, it becomes increasing difficult to sustain the same high levels of discipline and ideological fervor that had existed during the height of the revolution. However, the Vietnam experience is very different from that of the Soviet Union and China, in that the revolution continued for over 40 years. When the party could no longer find an enemy that would cause the population to fear for its survival, ideological disillusionment began to appear at a much faster pace. It was during this period of uncertainty that both formal and informal challenges to the status quo began to appear. In the formal realm, institutional boundaries solidified due to the complexity of managing a modern state. Additionally, because of an increasing division of labor among the three institutions of state in Vietnam, the circulation of elites at the middle and lower echelons ended as the technical skills of both military and civilian bureaucrats increased to meet new economic and

military threats. In both cases the types of training and skills required to qualify an individual to serve in one institution, were unavailable to individuals in the other institutions.

This then created a relationship of mutual benefit as each institution concentrated its efforts and resources on those areas within its area of expertise and relied on the other institutions to do the same.⁸⁴ At the very top, the party leadership, coordinated the efforts of all three institutions for the overall benefit of the state. Thus, the relationship of the military institution to the political structure was one of growing independence, albeit a contentious one. It is during this period that the primary concern of the military and bureaucratic institutions become a desire for greater autonomy from the party, while the party's primary interest was in maintaining its preeminent position in both the social and governmental hierarchy.

Issues concerning the nature of the Vietnamese socialist state also came under increasing scrutiny, but under a more informal basis. At the core of the informal relationship between the party, the military, and the bureaucracy was the maintenance of elite status. The existence of elites in a classless society may be an oxymoron, but these individuals were well aware of the fact that the benefits and advantages they enjoyed would significantly decrease if one institution was to be absorbed by another. Additionally, with the loss of the "imperialist invaders",

⁸⁴Hollis Hebbel, FBIS "Trends", 2 November 1983, pp. 14-16.

the necessity of maintaining a large standing military, active and reserve forces, came under increasing fire. It is also during this period that a changing of the guard takes place. Individuals who had proven themselves indispensable during the revolution now found themselves relics of a bygone era. Young well educated technocrats begin to appear on the scene and the older ideologist's were forced from the scene.⁸⁵

Beginning in 1979, the party leadership effectively abandoned it's 1976-1980 Five Year Plan. This signalled the end of the disastrous post-unification program of socialist industrialization which had envisioned a future for Vietnam where the North would serve as the industrial base and the South as the agricultural heartland. It soon became clear, however, that the collectivisation and industrialization program had failed due weaknesses within the core personnel structure of the party. Because of their lack of expertise, the program had been engineered prematurely, without the necessary preliminary strengthening of the peasant agriculture economy which occupied some 90 percent of the population and was doomed to failure from the start.⁸⁶

Despite some sporadic successes, the implementation of Vietnam's new economic schemes by the party proceeded slowly and poorly. The willingness of the people to endure continued economic hardship in a non-revolutionary period

⁸⁵Jonathan Luxmoore, Vietnam: The Dilemmas of Reconstruction, (London: The Institute for the Study of Conflict, 1983), p.16.

⁸⁶Vietnam: A Country Study, p. 151.

was coming to an end. Despite food production remaining at a roughly substance level for most of 1981, food riots broke out in several villages.⁸⁷ This was the warning the moderates in the government had been waiting for. In the early part of this same year, several senior civilian and military leaders were forced to step down. Despite the best efforts of the party to hide the facts, the true failed nature of the economic reform program was revealed by IMF figures, which showed a fall in Vietnam's per capita GNP in real terms from US\$241 in 1976 to US\$153 in 1980.⁸⁸

While differences emerged over the question of Soviet access to Vietnamese naval facilities, relations with China and the Kampuchean impasse created further uncertainties in Vietnamese foreign policy. A more immediate problem, however, related to Soviet foreign aid. The Soviet Union had become increasingly reluctant to provide continued economic and military aid at the same levels it had in previous years. Vietnam, now cut off from all international aid due to its continued occupation of Cambodia, had become increasingly dependant on Soviet aid to stabilize its economy. The Soviet's actions were considered to be a major factor in the tentative economic readjustments which took place during the

⁸⁷According to a United Nations estimate of early 1982, 45 percent of the Vietnamese population was under-nourished. See Thayer, p. 257.

⁸⁸Accompanying factors in this economic decline had been: the end of Chinese and non-communist aid after the Cambodian invasion, the accompanying diversion of precious resources to occupied Laos and Kampuchea, a series of disastrous harvests, and a cutback in western trade. See International Monetary Fund Country Report: Vietnam 1982.

1978 to 1981 period.⁸⁹ Once Vietnam's 1981-1985 Five Year Plan got underway, the absence of a long-term Soviet commitment to Vietnam's economic development presented state economic planners with a number of significant problems.⁹⁰

Of all of the institutions in Vietnam undergoing transformation, the party was the one institution to feel the greatest negative impact of this change in public perception. The deadlock in Cambodia, the failed ideological and economic integration of the south, the growing dependence on Soviet foreign aid, and ever increasing economic hardships all had an impact on the image of the party, its unity, and the morale of the cadre members. A major review of the party's membership took place during this period and in less than three years over 300,000 members had been dismissed for a variety of offenses ranging from corruption to ideological disloyalty. Taking advantage of this opportunity, a number of influential bureaucracy and military officials recommended a number of reform measures. These measures included the retirement of ineffective and incompetent leaders, especially older officials lacking adequate experience of peacetime administration, and a full overhaul of the bureaucratic process. This is

⁸⁹Duiker, pp. 110-111.

⁹⁰In his report to the Fifth VCP Congress of March 1982 Party Secretary General Le Duan praised the Soviet Union's past economic and military aid. However, no reference was made to future material aid, and the resulting lack of a clear-cut Soviet commitment was sufficient to forestall the passage of any major economic resolutions. See Luxmoore, pp. 16-17.

an example of the growing trend toward factional conflict being played out in public between institutional groups. The discontentment of the population is being used as a basis to bring conflict that had remained within the party organization out in the open.⁹¹

All of the factors described so far combined to make the Fifth Party Congress, held in March of 1982, the most important one to date. The actions taken both during and after the conference fundamentally altered the leadership structure of the government and the political role of the military in Vietnam. This reorientation of the socialist revolutionary concept in Vietnam was taken to secure its internal economic and physical survival. It also had the effect of solidifying the coalitional type of civil-military relationship that had begun to shape.

The most significant development of the congress, from a coalitional type of relationship perspective, was a series of high-level "changing of the guard" moves that took place. Of the eleven member Politburo, the top five members continued to hold their positions, but the remaining six were all replaced. Most prominent being General Vo Nguyen Giap, at the time he was the Council of Ministers vice-chairman.⁹² Of the six new appointees to the Politburo, were two

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Giap was not totally removed from his leadership role, he kept his position as a second Deputy Premier on the Central Committee, and his chairmanship of the Science and Technology Commission. See Luxmoore, p. 16.

young technocrats from the south.⁹³ One individual of specific interest to current Vietnamese politics was Vo Van Kiet, who now serves as the Premier of Vietnam.

The emergence of an independent state bureaucracy also impacted Vietnamese civil-military relations.⁹⁴ As the State Assembly became more powerful in the operations of government at the national level, so to did the province and district level organizations. They demanded and won concessions in both the political and economic realms. One such concession included the selection of individuals to run for public office. During this period, candidates were, for the first time, chosen by the local organizations and not from approved party member rosters.⁹⁵

The military also had to adjust to changes in public perception during this period to maintain its high level of esteem in the greater Vietnamese society. To maintain its influence in both society and the government, new adversaries, both internal and external, and new responsibilities within the economic and social realms had to be found. The military had come into existence during the revolution and had, out of both desire and necessity, become an important part of both Vietnam's economic and social infrastructure. Now that the revolution was over, it has to compete for funds against social and economic development

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Clark D. Neher, Southeast Asia in the New International Era, 2 ed., (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 198-199.

⁹⁵Lewis Stern, Renovating the Vietnamese Communist Party, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), pp. 8-10.

programs. Additionally, the public perception of military service is undergoing revision. The military is no longer seen as the fastest and best means of social improvement. Living conditions within the military are poor and the rigors of service are not as acceptable now that an atmosphere of peace prevails in the region. The competition being waged from the blossoming private sector to attract the best and brightest of Vietnam's youth is being lost by the military.⁹⁶ These factors are of specific concern to the future development of Vietnam and are covered in more detail in the next chapter.

Attempts by the military and the bureaucracy to increase their level of autonomy vis-a-vis the party coincided with the demise of communist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.⁹⁷ In insure their own survival, the party has attempted to increase its influence over the bureaucracy and the military in the last few years. The most significant of these measures from the civil-military standpoint are the changes that were made to the 1992 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The two previous constitutions of 1959 and 1980, assigned the armed forces such traditional duties as:

...being duty bound to remain combat ready to defend the national independence, sovereignty, political security and public order, territorial integrity and unity against foreign aggression, and safeguard the gains of the revolution.

⁹⁶Hollis Hebbel, FBIS-EAS-92-136-A, 17 July 1992.

⁹⁷Ibid.

Unlike the constitutions cited above, the new constitution also assigns the armed forces additional tasks. Specifically Article 45 of the new state charter reads:

The people's armed forces shall be absolutely loyal to the fatherland and the people; are duty bound to remain combat ready to defend national independence, sovereignty, security and public order, as well as territorial unification and integrity; **defend the socialist regime and revolutionary gains**; and join with the entire people in national conscription.

The inclusion of this new phrase is an indication of the level of concern found at the top of the party leadership structure. It is also an indication as to the increased bargaining power of the military over the party concerning issues of specific military interest. Additionally, with this new constitutional mandate, the military's role as protector of the Communist Party is assured.

The last issue impacting the development of a coalitional type of civil-military relationship concerns the elimination of the "Dual Command" structure within the military. This structure refers to the role played by political cadre officers in tactical military units.⁹⁸ From its inception, the armed forces have been commanded by both political and military officers. During this period, the military used its increased public prestige and economic leverage over the party to have the Dual Command system eliminated. This was partly a factor of institutional autonomy and partly due to the tactical failure of the Cambodian occupation. Unlike in the old days of the revolution, where the goal was political

⁹⁸Pike, pp. 145-150.

indoctrination, on the modern battlefield, the goal is mass destruction of opposing force. In this new environment, military units live and die by split second decision making. To survive and win, a streamlined, highly competent, and tactically proficient military officer is called for under the Soviet style military the Vietnamese adopted. The division of labor had finally caught up to the dual command officer system. As of late, some political leaders have begun discussing the possibility of reestablishing the political officer within the military command structure.⁹⁹ Given the current moves toward more autonomous institutions of state, this seems to be a remote possibility at this time.

D. SUMMARY

Throughout the Period of Civil-Military Evolution in Vietnam, transitions from one type of civil-military relationship to another - from fused to symbiotic to coalitional - were born of necessity not ideological expansionism. At the start of this period, the very existence of Vietnam as a functioning state was the goal of the revolution. Then unification became the rallying cry. Still later the survival of the newly independent state was the cause of internal disarray and economic failure. Throughout the period, however, the vast majority of the population remained motivated by a combination of revolutionary tradition, cultural pride, and desire for a better standard of living.

⁹⁹Hollis Hebbel, "The Vietnamese Military's Changing Role", Southeast Asian Affairs, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), p. 371.

During the fused phase, a single group of revolutionaries controlled and coordinated the activities of the entire movement. Once established in legitimate positions of authority, they begin to set up institutional structures to support their own survival in addition to meeting the administrative needs of the state. This symbiotic relationship, lead to the creation of barriers between the institutions, albeit permeable ones. As the role of the state grew in response to the war effort, so did the institutions tasked with providing both the men and equipment needed to conduct the fight. This caused the development of nonpermeable institutional boundaries and lead to the creation of a coalitional type relationship. As the pace of modern warfare and complexities of state administration grew, so to did the skills of individuals in each institution. Eventually, the degree of specialization required in each institution became so high, that it is now impossible for individuals to move between institutions. This has increased the institutional autonomy of both the bureaucracy and the military vis-a-vis the party.

E. CONCLUSION

During the over thirty years of revolutionary struggle that make up the Period of Civil-Military Evolution, the relationship between the bureaucracy, the military, and the party grew into one of mutual benefit as each institution

redefined its role in the governing process in terms of the economic and political consequences of failure.¹⁰⁰

The final shift to the current coalitional type of civil-military relationship not only brought greater autonomy to each institution but greater responsibility as well. The military now has greater responsibility for economic issues of importance to the state than in the previous periods, in addition to its traditional role as protector of the state from all threats, foreign and domestic. To accomplish these tasks, large numbers of high technology weapons systems were introduced into the armed forces. To operate these weapons, a training base was established that suited not only the increased skilled labor needs of the military, but also the needs of an expanding civilian manufacturing sector as well.

The following quotation provides a glimpse in to the unique nature of the current civil-military relationship and attempts to provide an additional explanation as to why during such a tumultuous period of history so few instances of public conflict have taken place:

The militia and self-defense forces (MSF) are the armed forces of the masses and are closely linked with production, social life, and political movement at the basic level.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰Russell Heng Hiang Khng, "Vietnam 1992: Economic Growth and political Caution", Southeast Asian Affairs, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Affairs, 1993), p. 353.

¹⁰¹Xuan Ba, pp. 25-27.

It is within this mind set that one must approach the issue of civil-military conflict. The influence of the military in both the political and social realms is by virtue of its enormous size alone significant. Despite the outward appearances of harmony, behind the scenes there is yet another struggle taking place. This time over competition for scarce resources and a growing desire for increased institutional autonomy, not terrain. Yet, despite the outward claims, this author contends that economics has been the driving force of the civil-military reform measures instituted to date, not revolutionary ideology.

VI. CIVIL-MILITARY CONFLICTS

This chapter concerns itself with the nature of the civil-military conflicts that have been most common during the evolution of civil-military relations in Vietnam. It has only been in recent years, that instances of civil-military conflict have come to light in Vietnam. Some are the product of the rapid modernization process taking place in Vietnam. While others are of a more fundamental nature and center on the ideal nature of each institutions' place in the state as a whole.¹⁰² Each category that follows highlights a specific aspect of the Party-Military institutional autonomy conflict.

A. REDEFINING BUREAUCRATIC CONTROL MEASURES

Throughout its modern history, the military has been controlled by the party through a combination of social, emotional, ideological, and constitutional means. The social aspects linking the military to the will of the people and the emotional ties to the spirit of the revolution have not changed significantly since the end of the revolution. However, the last two aspects, the ideological and constitutional means have been significantly revised to support the growing fears of the party that it too could fall from power like its East European ideological brothers.

Additionally, a link between the state bureaucracy based on the growing demands

¹⁰²Specifically, those involving measures intended to insure civilian control over the military and issues involving the fundamental roles, missions, and survival of both the party and the military as autonomous institutions.

of economic reform has been extended to include bureaucratic oversight of military affairs in the public service arena as well.¹⁰³ Both of these measures combine to bring the daily operations of the military more in line with the needs of the Vietnamese economy, and less towards military self-preservation.

Ideological and social indoctrination are inter-related and as such can be used as an effective means of instilling a sense of duty and honor in the military that constitutional or legislative control measures can not match. By portraying the military as the servant of the people's will in historical, emotional, social, and cultural terms, the party hopes to instill the value of loyalty to the party in the hearts and minds of those who serve in the armed forces. This however, has not proven to be the case. Since the end of the revolution ideological indoctrination has had a different effect on the individuals serving in the military. Due to poor living conditions most have become disillusioned with the socialist ideology,¹⁰⁴ not imbued with socialist spirit.

Conscription is another means by which the civilian institutions of state attempt to exercise control over the military. Over the course of the past few years, legislation concerning the length of service, the ages of eligibility, and authorized deferments have been enacted into law. Most were designed to eliminate the perception that conscription was only for the peasant classes as the

¹⁰³Hebbel, "The Vietnamese Military's Changing Role", pp. 364-365.

¹⁰⁴Ibid, pp. 367-368.

elites were able to escape their tour of duty. Other legislation has been passed to make it more difficult to dodge the draft by taking legal action against the families of those who fail to serve. While other measures provide economic incentives and increased social status to the families of those soldiers serving in the military.¹⁰⁵ All of these measures are designed to insure the ability of the military to execute its new role as protector of the party.¹⁰⁶

B. MILITARY INTERESTS IN THE POLITICAL REALM

Competition for shares of an ever decreasing national budget rank as the primary area of contention from the military perspective.¹⁰⁷ Other areas include political interference in the promotion and assignment of senior and mid-grade officers, and military end strength, specifically, legislation concerning conscription and demobilization. As with all modern military's, communist and non-communist alike, Vietnamese military leaders find themselves having to make concessions between force structure, weapons procurement, and infrastructure based on economic rather than security concerns. The military's ability to meet the security missions assigned it have come into increasing conflict with social welfare programs, economic reform measures, and public infrastructure modernization.

¹⁰⁵Luxmoore, p. 17.

¹⁰⁶Hebbel, "The Vietnamese Military's Changing Role", p. 364.

¹⁰⁷Luxmoore, p. 16.

The maintenance of the military's elite status is also a factor of current conflict between the military and the party. While the party has been weeding out the less than ideologically pure cadre members, it has been making up for lost membership from among the ranks of the military. This renewed emphasis on the politicalization of the military has met with considerable opposition from both the military and some within the party. Neither can decide what course Vietnam should follow in terms of maintaining the benefits of institutional elite status.

It is with these facts in mind that the military leadership has taken one step back from its program of professionalization. After years of attempting to distance itself from the political process, disengagement from the political process is not currently seen as being in the best interests of the military as an institution. It is felt that to reduce military representation on the top party and state organizations would be counter productive to the social and economic status of the military at this critical time.¹⁰⁸

C. POLITICAL INTERESTS IN THE MILITARY REALM

Ideological concerns are at the forefront of this area. Driven by ever increasing economic and political isolation and a growing determination to preserve its dominant position, the party has begun to redefine the role of the military in internal politics as a means to ensure its own survival. However, this

¹⁰⁸Insight gained during personal interview conducted by this author with several unidentified Vietnamese government officials.

bid to force the military to become more ideologically attuned, could falter if the problems outlined in previous chapters of this thesis, which are both economic and political in nature, continue to go unresolved. The civilian institutions are very much aware of the critical role of the military in the implementing of general socialist policy directives. Maintaining military cooperation in the economic reform process underway is the only way the development of a market based economy can take place in Vietnam. This cooperation, however, will have a price. The autonomy enjoyed by the military has given it considerable leverage with both the bureaucracy and the party. Where the compromise line will be drawn has yet to be determined.

D. POTENTIAL FOR DIRECT INTERVENTION

Despite all of the areas of both potential and actual civil-military conflict described above, the likelihood of direct military intervention in the governing process via Coup d'etat is very low. Despite the fact that the party leadership almost managed to destroy the state with its inept economic practices in the late 1980's, the military did not intervene in the governing process. This unwillingness to take control of the state, despite the complete ineptitude shown by the party leadership, is viewed, by this author, as a sign of the military's support for the party and the process of civilian rule.

E. SUMMARY

The continued appearance of articles in the Vietnamese media by senior military officers on the evolving nature of civil-military relations, is an indication of the internal debate taking place over the issue of repoliticalization of the military and competition for resources. It is only during the coalitional period that these disagreements have come out in public. During the two previous periods, conflicts were resolved within the party by the key leaders of each institution. The current trend of public disagreement has alarmed some within the party, as the public support for the military seems to be higher than that enjoyed by the party.

F. CONCLUSION

The proceeding analysis shows that civil-military conflicts have taken place in the past and will continue to develop in Vietnam in the coming years. Thus, in order to define the nature of current conflicts one must concentrate on the specific issue, or issues, at the center of the conflict and the means used to resolve the conflict. For these last issues are more enlightening to a Vietnam watcher than the mere existence of conflict as an indicator of civil-military tension.

VII. CONCLUSION

In attempting to describe the role of the military in the evolution of civil-military relations in Vietnam, one should bear in mind William Turley's admonishment that:

it is crucial in studying.. Vietnam to avoid making clear-cut distinctions between civilian and military institutions, because the military is integrated into the Party and State's administrative and decision making structure and performs its political role legitimately. The (VPA) may be politically active, it may be politically influential, even preponderant, but it cannot be called politically dominant and much of its political presence is normal for the regime.¹⁰⁹

It is with in this context that I contend that the evolution of civil-military relations in Vietnam have been strongly influenced by geographical, historical, cultural, and ideological aspects unique to the Vietnam case, although many would disagree as to the exact nature of the influence each exerts.

As the preceding analysis shows, the Revolutionary Professional Soldier theory as defined by Perlmutter and LeoGrande does not fully explain the evolution of civil-military relations in Vietnam. Unlike the revolutions in Russia, China, and Israel, the determinants of the Vietnamese revolution did not spring from whole cloth overnight. Also, unlike the revolutions cited in the works of

¹⁰⁹William S. Turley, "Army, Party, and Society in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam: Civil-Military Relations in a Mass-Mobilization Society", PH.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1972, p.8.

Perlmutter, LeoGrande, and James D. Jordan,¹¹⁰ the entire basis of Vietnamese society was not wiped away overnight by the revolution. In Vietnam many aspects of the pre-revolutionary society already conformed to the socialist structure, and thus remained in place after the revolution. The ground work for the introduction of the Revolutionary Professional Soldier ethos was not only a product of the communist revolution, but also of thousands of years of physical and cultural domination and the notion of struggle, as described in Chapter III. Unlike its socialist counterparts, the Vietnamese revolution was born of both organic beliefs and modern socialist organizational structures.

In the beginning, however, the first groups to oppose French rule over Vietnam were not doing so as a means of consciously reaffirming their traditional confucian ideology. Most were simply acting on behalf of a selfish concern over losing their social status and economic power to foreigners. These first attempts by the mandarin class to resist the French, however, failed because they lacked an integrated ideological basis and the support of the peasants. However, with each generation that passed, Vietnamese revolutionary movements became more sophisticated and successful. At its earliest stage, resistance in Vietnam was inspired by the antiforeignism and racial and cultural pride noted in Chapter III. The racial and cultural xenophobia aspect of this strategy was reinforced in 1905

¹¹⁰James J. Jordan, "The Maoist vs. The Professional Vision of a People's Army, in Military Power and Political Power" in China in the 1970's: Organization, Leadership, Political Strategy, ed William W. Whitson, (New York: Irvington Publishers, 1972)

by the victory of fellow Asians, the Japanese, over the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War. In order to overcome a lack of a uniting ideology, cultural pride and antiforeignism served as a makeshift but useful framework for early Vietnamese revolutionaries during the pre-World War I period. This approach was further reinforced, but in a different way, by the influence of Sun Yat-Sen and the Chinese revolution of 1911. Sun's combination of republicanism and nationalism appealed to Vietnamese revolutionaries, because it excluded the possibility of a rejuvenation of the imperial system and for the first time openly questioned the ideological validity of Confucianism. Not surprisingly, Woodrow Wilson also had an influence on the development of Vietnamese nationalism. His ideas on the self-determination of peoples, however, lacked the organizational and tactical implementation concepts found in Leninism. The experience of World War I had exposed Vietnamese revolutionary leaders to democratic ideals as well as communist ideology. Modern nationalism encompassing total reform of society emerged as the most significant aspect of the revolutionary milieu during the 20's and 30's.

The most important increment of the Vietnamese Marxist-Leninist revolutionary movement that followed in the 1940's, was its integrating "messianic" appeal. Ho's brand of Marxism-Leninism linked traditional Vietnamese nationalism, defined as unconditional independence and decolonization, with the concept of socioeconomic reform so badly desired by the Vietnamese peasant class. Adding to its Vietnamese character was the fact

that Leninist ideology included the notion of an educated elite, which resembled the mandarinate system in Vietnam. These people, the mandarin's, had lead earlier revolutions against both the Chinese and the French, and now saw Leninism as an opportunity to again exert their influence by serving as the architects or "Vanguard" of the latest revolution.

Unlike the model as revealed in Russia, China, and Israel, Ho's strategy combined Western technique and anti-Western sentiment with socialist revolution. The Viet Minh served as a middle ground for both traditional Vietnamese nationalist, who wanted to drive all invaders into the sea, and the Sun Yat-Sen type who wanted to reform Vietnamese society. The combination of Ho's ideology and Giap's military skills offered not only an intellectual critique of colonialism, but an organizational and tactical basis for anti-colonial military operations.

This tactical flexibility aspect of Leninism, however, did prove to be a critical factor in the eventual success of the Vietnamese revolution. Both Ho and Giap noted that previous revolutions had failed due to an uncompromising adherence to abstract principles. They determined to the path to victory lay in a strategy that concentrated on operational realities instead of abstract principles. Operational and ideological flexibility made possible the strategy of the united front which, after many variations and shifts during the fused and symbiotic phases, ultimately proved successful in 1975.

However, unlike the other revolutions cited, Ho's theory involved a two stage revolution in Vietnam. According to this concept, the socialist revolution could only occur after a nationalist revolution had prepared the way by overthrowing the colonial regime and establishing an indigenous "revolutionary" government. Accordingly, the party followed a tactic of close collaboration with both noncommunist and anti-French forces in the pre-revolution and Fused periods (1940-1954). These non-Communist allies were then dealt with in the Period of Civil-Military Evolution - Symbiotic phase.

During these periods, Ho proclaimed leadership of a united front in order to gain control of the revolutionary movement and to increase its popular support. Such fundamental socialist ideas as class warfare and social revolution were not openly proclaimed as part of the Viet Minh's ideology of revolution at this time. National independence was made the dominant issue until about 1950.

Viet Minh leaders of the revolution called on all classes of the Vietnamese people to rally behind their leadership in the quest for independence and liberation. Unlike the revolutions in Russia and China, the issue of national independence took precedence over all political theories and plans for the post revolutionary period. Ho, like the early Zionist leaders, recognized nationalism as the lowest common denominator which could serve as an attractive ideology for the largest number of people.

The Viet Minh for the first time began to exercise governmental control over the political, economic, and security policies of the country during the Symbiotic

period of civil-military relations (1955 - 1982). During this period, the primary emphasis continued to focus on national unity with some radical social reforms beginning to appear.¹¹¹ All social classes and ethnic groups were urged to develop "the unity of the people" and to fall in behind the "revolutionary banner" of the Viet Minh to resist the attempts by the US to overthrow the new socialist revolutionary government.¹¹²

The mystique of the Revolutionary Professional Soldier in Vietnam is closely related to its ideology, which I have shown in the preceding chapters to have had as its common denominator the general desire for national independence and antiforeignism. The historic cultural and racial unity of the Vietnamese people and the need for political unity in time of crisis were themes stressed by Viet Minh organizers thorough out all three periods under review.¹¹³ The Revolutionary Professional Soldier mystique which came to prominence during the Struggle for Liberation in Vietnam, drew its strength from the revolutionary tradition of the country, the charismatic personality of Ho Chi Minh, and from what ever confidence in the Viet Minh's ultimate victory may have been engendered by its propaganda organizations or actual tactical successes.

¹¹¹Douglas Pike, War, Peace, and the Viet Cong, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1969), pp. 23-25.

¹¹²Giap, pp. 40-14

¹¹³See Ho Chi Minh, On Revolution, pp. 143-145.

When the Viet Minh appeared on the scene in the 1940's the habits and attitudes necessary for successful insurgency and anti-government organizations were already well-established in Vietnam. Anti-French revolts and plots had occurred sporadically throughout the colonial period, and violent political intrigue certainly predated the arrival of the French in IndoChina. The revolutionary ethos found in the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people had been created long before the appearance of the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary ideology.¹¹⁴

The nature of the civil-military conflicts faced by the political and military institutions in Vietnam are not unique. Many communist and developing nations are today faced with the same types of problems discussed in this thesis. The basic question of analysis revolves around the question of what type of military does the state need to protect itself and what additional roles should the military have in the economic developmental process? In the post Cold War era, the threat to a states' survival can be both from foreign invasion and internal economic collapse. Based on the growing integration of the military into the economic arena, economic concerns are clearly being placed ahead of the security concerns in modern Vietnam.

This unprecedented level of uncertainty has allowed the political leadership of Vietnam to refocus the dual mission of the military to suit short term economic goals. The leadership of the military, however, is very much aware of the long

¹¹⁴Giap, pp.5-13.

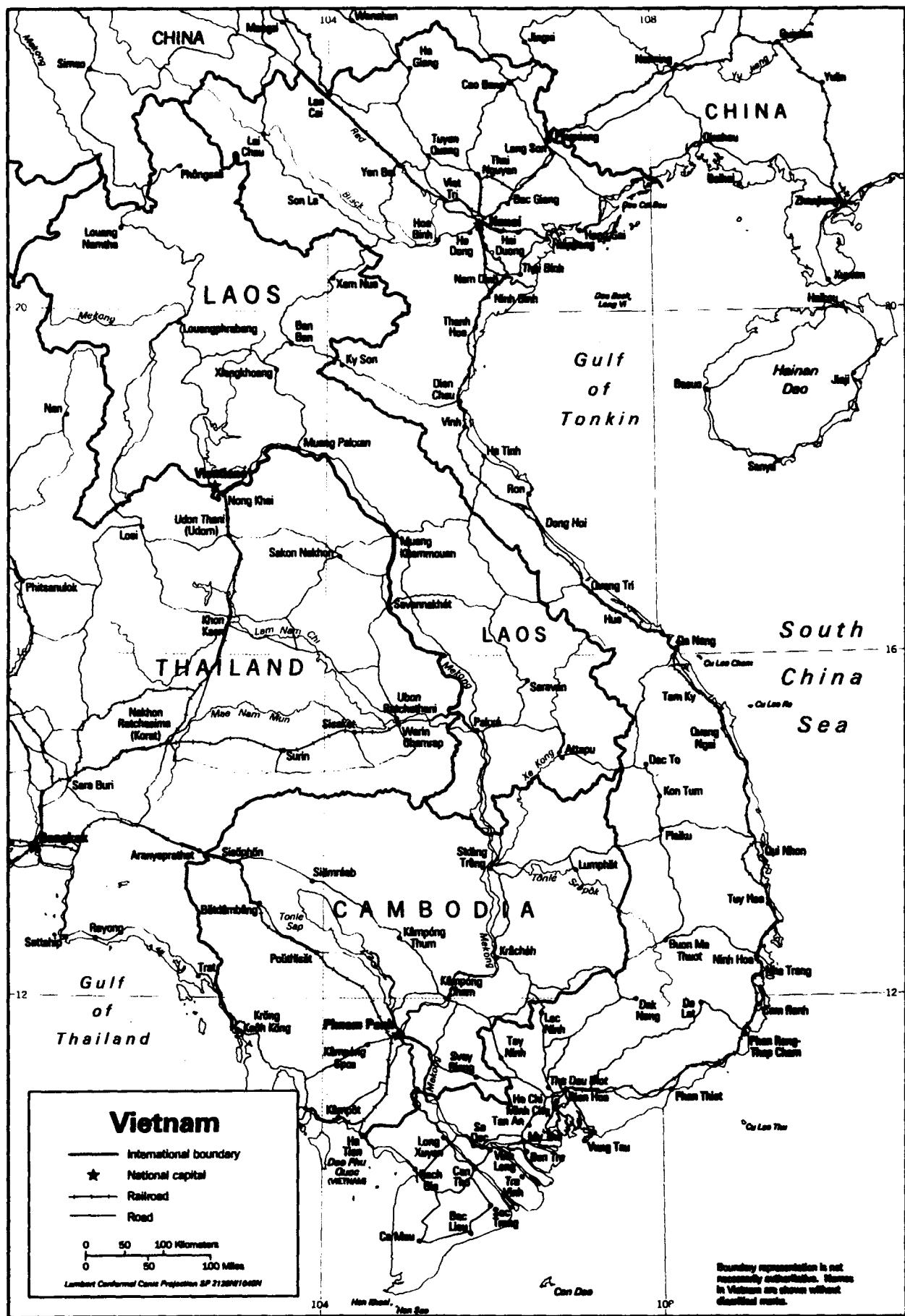
term threats posed by China and a resurgent Khmer Rouge in Cambodia to the physical survival of the state.

It is the belief of this author that the ground work has been set for the final evolutionary stage of civil-military relations in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. No longer are their actions of the party driven by a quest for a utopian socialist state. Today their focus is on developing a market based economy with in the broadest interpretation of the socialist structure. This will in turn lead to an expansion of the current democratization process and to a professionalization of the military and its eventual disengagement from politics altogether. Only time will tell if a lack of continued growth with in the Vietnamese economy or a resurgence of military instability in the region will cause the party to reassert its ideological controls over the military. If so, they would most likely accomplish this through a combination of further integration of military elites into the party senior leadership structure along with public appeals to the historical nationalistic sentiment of the peoples armed forces.

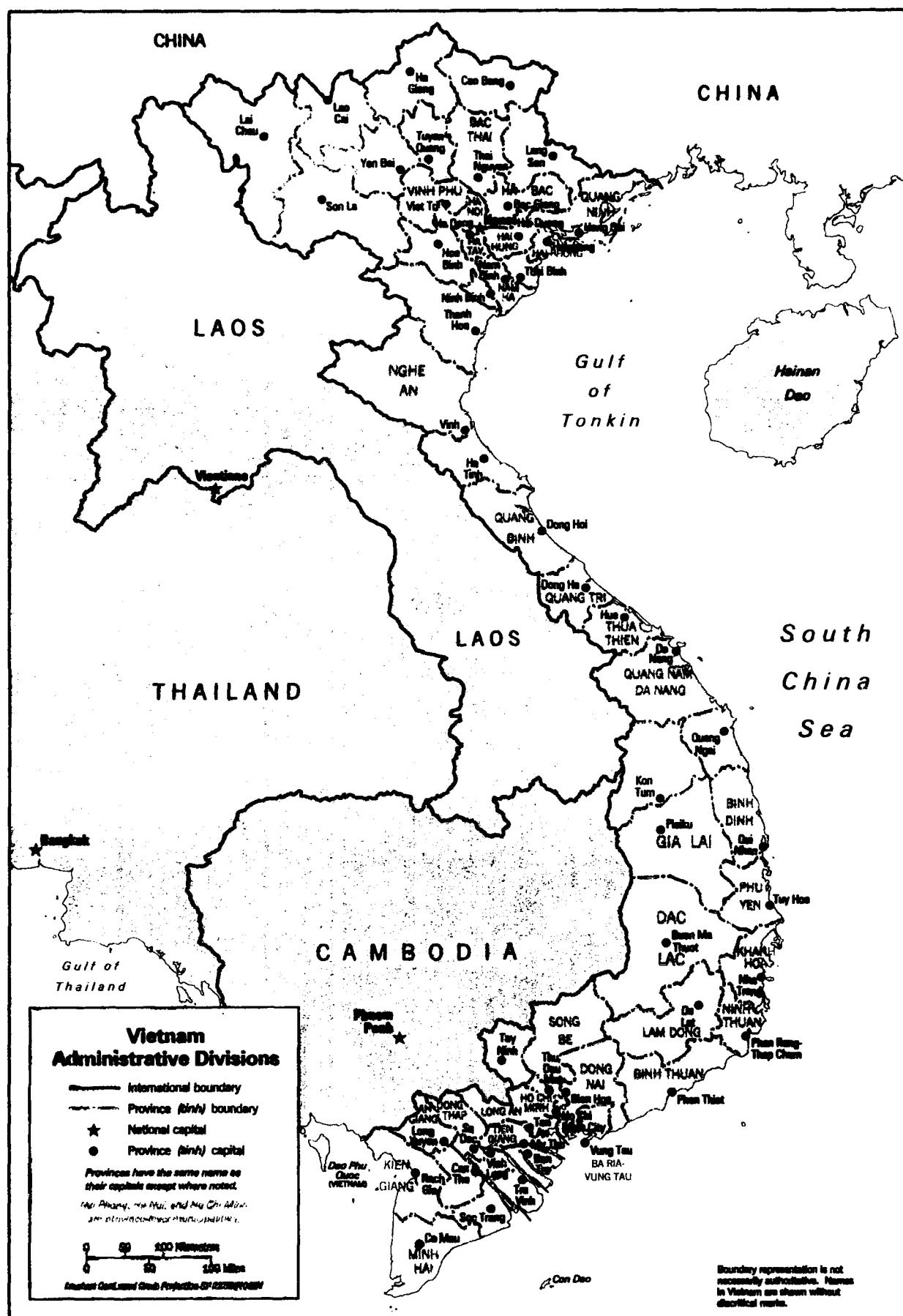
In either case, as shown in this analysis, civil-military relations in Vietnam are fluid and not static in nature. Both the party and the military understand the necessity of adapting to the economic, political, and security landscape of the state and the region. As the current economic reform program (Doi Moi) further changes the economic structure of the state, so to will it cause changes in the civil-military relationship. Despite the staunch socialist nature of the regime, I

predict a continued movement by Vietnam toward not only economic, but social and political democratization as well.

APPENDIX
MAP 1



MAP 2



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